

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Empower Families: The bill provides for the expansion of the Florida 211 Network which provides community information and referral services. This expansion will assist more individuals and families in getting the assistance they need for a wide range of issues.

Maintain Public Security: The bill requires 211 providers to enter into memoranda of agreement with county emergency operations centers to coordinate their efforts in the event of a disaster. In the event of a disaster, this may put less strain on emergency personnel.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Background

On July 21, 2000, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted Order No. FCC 00-256, in CC Docket No. 92-105, relating to the 211 dialing code. The FCC reserved the 211 dialing code for community information and referral services. The 211 code is intended to be an easy-to-remember and universally-recognizable number that would enable a critical connection between individuals and families in need and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies. Dialing 211 helps, for example, the elderly, the disabled, those who do not speak English, those who are having a personal crisis, the illiterate, or those who are new to communities, by providing referrals to and information about health and human services organizations and agencies.

In 2002, the Florida Health and Human Services Access Act¹ (Act) authorized the Agency to develop a comprehensive, automated system for access to health care services. This system was to be implemented as a pilot project aimed at testing the feasibility of adopting a statewide 211 information and referral network capable of supporting the eligibility determination process required for publicly funded health care programs.

Section 408.918, F.S., of the Act further authorized the planning, development, and implementation of a statewide Florida 211 Network to serve as the single point of entry for information and referrals to publicly funded health and human service programs. Due to loss of funding, the pilot project was scheduled to be completed on December 31, 2003, but it was terminated on June 30, 2003.

Under s. 408.918 (2), F.S., the Agency was required to develop criteria that organizations must adhere to in order to become certified Florida 211 Network providers. Previously, any organization could obtain a 211 number without meeting specific standards or qualifications.

Through certification, the Agency ensures that quality, consistent information and services are provided to those seeking health and human services across the state. Prior to receiving certification all candidates must be able to effectively demonstrate that their organization works collaboratively and have written agreements with specialized information and referral systems including crisis centers, child care resource and referral programs, elder help-lines, homeless coalitions, designated emergency management systems, 911 and 311² systems.

The Florida 211 Network Provider Certification Rule³ was adopted on April 28, 2003. The Agency has authorized, or is in the process of authorizing 12 organizations for certification as Florida 211 Network providers. Several other agencies have made official inquires regarding the certification process. In

¹ Ch. 2002-223, L.O.F., this act created ss. 408.911-408.918, F.S.

² The FCC has set aside 311 for non-emergency police and other governmental services.

³ S. 59G-11, F.A.C.

Florida, 211 is currently available to over 13 million people in 36 counties or over 77 percent of the state's population.

Currently, Florida's 211 providers receive funding from various sources. Funds may be provided through the United Way, county and local city governments, nonprofit agencies, corporations, grants, or private donations.

Proposed Changes

Section 1.

The bill amends s. 408.918, F.S., relating to the Florida 211 Network. The bill revises legislative intent by adding the finding that a statewide Florida 211 Network would be of great benefit to Floridians, particularly in times of disaster.

The bill creates s. 408.918(3)(a) through s. 408.918(3)(c), F.S. Paragraph (a) requires the Florida 211 Network to be expanded statewide to provide services in each county. Moreover, each 211 provider and its county emergency operations center are required to execute memoranda of agreement specifying how they will coordinate their efforts in the event of a disaster.

In order to implement the Florida 211 Network business plan, paragraph (b) requires state funds be appropriated to AHCA. AHCA is to distribute the funds to the Florida Alliance of Information & Referral Services (FLAIRS). The FLAIRS is to make the funds available to counties on a matching basis, with each county being required to provide \$1 for \$1 the amount it is provided from the funds. At a minimum, the funds are to be used to achieve statewide 211 coverage.

Paragraph (c) relates to reporting requirements. By December 15, 2005, each county that receives funding under this subsection is required to report to FLAIRS its expenditure of funds on a form developed by the Agency. By January 1, 2006, FLAIRS is required to provide a statewide report to the Agency which includes the individual reports and aggregated data provided by the counties. By January 15, 2006, the Agency is required to submit a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives detailing the expenditure of the funds appropriated to it for 211 purposes.

Section 2.

The bill contains an appropriation of \$5 million from the General Revenue Fund to AHCA to fund the statewide expansion of the Florida 211 Network to all counties and to enhance the operations of existing 211 providers.

Section 3.

This act shall take effect upon becoming law.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Amends s. 408.918, F.S., to revise legislative intent, provide for the expansion of the Florida 211 Network, and creates reporting requirements.

Section 2. Appropriates \$5 million from the General Revenue Fund.

Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None

2. Expenditures:

The bill provides for an appropriation of \$5 million from the General Revenue Fund to the AHCA.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

The bill provides that counties are eligible to receive state funds on a matching basis from the funds appropriated for the implementation of the Florida 211 Network.

2. Expenditures:

The bill provides that in order to receive the appropriated funds the counties are required to match \$1 for \$1 the amount received from the appropriated funds.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

The bill expands the Florida 211 Network system which provides an easy-to-remember and universally-recognizable number that would enable a critical connection between individuals and families in need with the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

The bill amends 408.918, F.S., to expand the Florida 211 Network to provide services in each county. The expansion does not appear voluntary, and it calls for counties to spend funds for the establishment of or enhancement of a 211 system within each county.

2. Other:

None

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE & COMBINED BILL CHANGES